Performance Update 2006-07

Alberta's 10 Year Strategy

Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce

Alberta

Introduction

Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce (BETW)[1] is Alberta's 10 year labour force development strategy. It was developed by the Government of Alberta, community and industry partners[2] and released in July 2006. In order to monitor its progress, government developed performance indicators and related targets for each outcome. This report provides an update on how well the strategy is working a year after implementation.

BETW's aim is to ensure there is a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to help sustain Alberta's thriving economy now and in the future. Accordingly, BETW focuses on three main outcomes:

- More workers – An improved supply of appropriately skilled, knowledgeable workers in the province.
- Better trained people – Highly motivated and skilled, educated and innovative people.
- Innovative environments – High performance work environments that can make maximum use of innovation and technology.

Although three and 10 year targets were established, this report focuses on actions undertaken in fiscal 2006-07, specific to each of the four strategic themes: Inform, Attract, Develop and Retain. Appendix A provides a complete overview of all projects and initiatives to address labour and skill shortages.

[1] The BETW strategy is available on Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry's website at **www.employment.alberta.ca/betw**.

[2] Partners include industry, business (including the private and public sectors and the public service), labour groups, professional associations, volunteer and community agencies, education and training providers, and where appropriate, other orders of government.

Highlights of Actions to Date

Inform

Goal: Albertans and stakeholders have increased access to current, accurate and relevant education, career, workplace and labour market information needed to make informed career, workplace and labour market decisions.

Actions:

- Worked with industry-sector stakeholders to identify challenges and develop action-oriented strategies to address these challenges. The retail strategy was released in September 2006 and additional strategies are completed or in various stages of development (i.e. tourism and hospitality, energy, manufacturing, construction, etc.).

- Worked with Métis and First Nation groups to identify workforce development challenges and issues unique to these communities. Further work is underway to identify existing and new actions to address these challenges.

- Enhanced International Qualification Assessment Services, an advisory educational assessment service which compares educational qualifications from other countries to Alberta's standards. In 2006-07, 4,500 assessment certificates were issued, an increase of 40 per cent over the previous year.

- Addressed labour and skill shortages in the trades through increased promotion of the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). The program allows high school students to become apprentices and earn credits toward an apprenticeship program and a high school diploma at the same time. In 2006-07, a record 355 high school graduates were awarded RAP scholarships worth $1,000 each.

Attract

Goal: Alberta attracts the interprovincial migrants, immigrants and temporary foreign workers necessary to address labour force needs.

Actions:

- Signed the Alberta-British Columbia Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement in April 2006. The agreement, implemented in April 2007, will knock down interprovincial commerce barriers and lead to greater movement of skilled workers across provincial boundaries.

- Expedited the process for bringing in temporary foreign workers. A Canada-Alberta working group was established to review and change processes including delivering regional "How to Hire Foreign Workers" seminars and establishing an Alberta Temporary Foreign Worker Hotline to respond to inquiries by employers and foreign nationals.

- Implemented the Off Campus Work Permit Program for International Students in July 2006. The program has made it easier for non-Canadian students to apply for work permits, enabling them to work off campus while they complete their studies.

Develop

Develop a High Performance Workforce

Goal: Albertans gain improved access to the education and training needed to address short-term labour market demands and build long-term capacity to respond to future opportunities and challenges.

Actions:

- Worked to improve high school completion rates, especially for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. As part of Alberta's high school completion initiative – Your Future Starts Here, roundtable discussions were held throughout the province in summer 2006 and a High School Completion Symposium was held September 24-25, 2006.

- Increased supports for Aboriginal students in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system were put in place. As of October 2006, Aboriginal content and perspectives have been infused to enhance curricula in a number of subject areas, and an additional $1,061 in funding for each eligible First Nations, Métis and Inuit student has been provided to jurisdictions to enhance supports and programs.

- Registered over 23,000 new apprentices between April 2006 and March 2007, bringing the total number of apprentices being trained to over 60,000.

- Increased affordability of post-secondary education by creating new and expanding existing scholarships and bursaries for students.

- Increased accessibility and quality of post-secondary education by investing an additional $250 million into the Access to the Future endowment. It provides seed money for innovative and collaborative post-secondary projects as well as matching grants for donations to universities, colleges, technical institutes and other post-secondary institutions.

Develop High Performance Work Environments

Goal: Alberta adopts all the characteristics of a high performance economy, such as improved workplaces and working arrangements, increased capital investment, technology adoption and production process improvements.

Actions:

- Encouraged employers to adopt technology and best practices. Government has undertaken 36 LEAN assessments with Alberta employers, along with implementation support, to help increase productivity.
- Implemented the Accelerating Innovation Strategy which provides marketing, mentorship, business and technical advice to employers on a variety of activities. Funding has also been provided to support agencies fostering commercialization.

Retain

Goal: Enhanced community and work attractiveness leads to more workers remaining engaged in Alberta's labour force.

Actions:

- Sponsored symposiums and forums in a number of locations to share employer best practices including the Minister's Symposium in September 2006. The symposium provided an opportunity to highlight new and innovative approaches Alberta businesses are taking to attract, develop and retain people.
- Helped new immigrants find the supports needed when moving to Alberta. Community integration plans are being developed with Red Deer, Lloydminster, Edmonton, Calgary and Vegreville to address immigrant retention and integration issues.

- Established welcoming communities and workplaces that have an environment of respect and inclusion for all people. Awarded approximately $850,000 in grants to reduce racism and discrimination in communities, organizations and workplaces.

- Coordinated research into the skills required to support innovation. Phase two of the Alberta Science and Research Authority sponsored report on retention of Highly Qualified People (HQP) is completed, including recommendations on how to foster attraction, growth and retention of HQP in the province.

Priorities and Actions for 2007-08

Traditional workforce relationships and workplace environments need to evolve to respond to rapid changes in technology, a thriving economy and a global marketplace. To meet these challenges, the Alberta government will be placing a high priority on the following initiatives in the coming year:

- finalizing and implementing industry workforce strategies developed in the past year and developing new strategies, including the Health Workforce Action Plan and the First Nations and Métis Workforce Strategy;

- implementing a "Made in Alberta" Immigration Strategy;

- supporting increased settlement services;

- implementing the Alberta-British Columbia Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement;

- increasing access to post-secondary programs, including increased apprenticeship participation;

- implementing the High School Completion initiative;
- developing a productivity strategy, and
- supporting employers in retaining and engaging mature workers.

Conclusion

Alberta is increasingly playing a lead role in the global economy. The province stands on the threshold of opportunity as it undergoes the strongest period of economic growth ever recorded by any province in Canada's history. Managing that growth and ensuring Alberta is in the best possible position to take advantage of this growth is an ongoing challenge.

Over the next year, the Alberta government will continue to work with its partners to achieve the labour force development outcomes identified in BETW. As part of its regular three-year business planning, all government ministries are identifying actions to address labour and skill shortages and resources. Ministries are also actively looking for opportunities for community and industry partnerships and collective approaches to issues.

The responsibility for labour force development is shared by all Albertans. Joint efforts will ensure Albertans are able to use their education and skills effectively to maintain a thriving, vibrant province for future generations.

Appendix A

Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce Actions Completed in 2006-07

Inform

Published New Employer Labour Market Resources (AEII)	• Released Industry and Employer Toolkit, BETW Newsletter, 12 Industry Sector Labour Market and Economic Indicator Dashboards, and BETW Inventory of Government of Alberta Initiatives in summer 2006.
Enhanced the International Qualification Assessment Services (AEII)	• Implemented pilot project for multi-channel Specialized Information Services to respond to employer inquiries related to international credentials. • Published Country Educational System Profiles on educational systems in four countries (China, the Philippines, South Korea and the United Kingdom). Developed preliminary plans for a website on foreign educational credentials. • Issued 4,500 assessment certificates to immigrants that recognized their foreign credentials, an increase of 40 per cent over the previous year.
Developed an Oil Sands Occupational Supply Demand Model (Energy)	• Completed the Oil Sands Labour Resource Study to gather oil sands occupational test data on employment requirements for 18 selected occupations.
Enhanced the Occupational Supply Demand Outlook Model (AEII)	• Enhanced the Occupational Supply Demand Outlook Model 2006-2016 to include 69 additional occupations with more detail, for a total of 209 occupations.

Developed Industry Workforce Strategies (AEII)	• Released the retail strategy in September 2006. Retail Council of Canada is implementing the strategy. • Developing strategies for energy, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality, and construction. Public releases to follow in 2007/08. • Held five workshops with First Nations and Métis organizations to begin work on the Aboriginal Workforce Strategy.
Developed Workplace Safety Resources (AEII, AE)	• Launched the Work Safe Passport, Workplace Health and Safety Teacher's Resource Binder and the Workplace Health and Safety Teacher's Toolkit. Delivered presentations and workshops on these resources in September/October 2006.
Enhanced Promotion of the Registered Apprenticeship Program (AAET)	• Awarded a record 355 high school graduates with program scholarships worth $1,000 each.
Enhanced the Raising Awareness Initiative (AAET)	• Expanded support for the Learning Clicks program, including an Aboriginal and parent component. • Developed a new mentorship program.

Attract

Expanded the Provincial Nominee Program (AEII)	• Increased number of Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) certificate allocations per year from 600 to 1000. PNP staff increased from 10 to 23 to support this activity.
Signed the Alberta-British Columbia Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (IIAR)	• Signed Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement in April 2006 for implementation in April 2007.

Streamlined Temporary Foreign Worker Processes (AEII)	• Canada-Alberta Working Group expedited the process for bringing in temporary foreign workers by creating regional occupation lists. These lists have minimized advertising efforts required under the Foreign Worker Program.
Established a Job Opportunities Online Service (AEII)	• Developed a website for Alberta employers to post job opportunities to attract foreign nationals.
Delivered "How to Hire A Foreign Worker" Seminars (AEII)	• Organized and delivered six regional seminars in Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Calgary and Lethbridge in partnership with the federal government. Additional seminars delivered to industry-specific groups. High demand continues. • Developed a reference document for employers with the federal government to explain the foreign worker process in a variety of contexts.
Established a Temporary Foreign Worker Hotline (AEII)	• Established the hotline to respond to inquiries from employers and foreign nationals.
Established an Economic Immigration Marketing Strategy (AEII)	• Expanded the International Marketing Strategy developed in support of the "Made in Alberta" approach to immigration. • Undertook market research to identify opportunities and/or initiatives to attract temporary foreign workers and permanent residents to Alberta in the following markets: United Kingdom (U.K.), France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Korea, Philippines, Taiwan, India, United States and Mexico. Special focus on marketing and recruitment trips to the U.K. for physicians and other health professions.

Implemented the Off Campus Work Permit Program for International Students (AEII, AAET)	• Implemented the program in July 2006 to make it easier for non-Canadian students to apply for work permits to work off campus while they complete their studies.
Hosted a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Forum (AAET)	• Hosted the forum in June 2006 to raise awareness and determine next steps in moving forward on PLAR and recognizing credentials and experience of immigrants and interprovincial migrants.

Develop

Expanded the First Nations Training-to-Employment Program (AEII)	• Expanded the program to include off-reserve First Nations and Métis people – seven new projects underway.
Expanded the Workforce Partnerships Program (AEII)	• Approved strategic direction paper to include program elements for Workforce Attraction - Retention Strategies and Workforce Development Training. Program guidelines completed.
Worked to Improve High School Completion Rates (AE)	• Held roundtable discussion as part of Alberta's high school completion initiative – Your Future Starts Here, throughout the province in summer 2006. A High School Completion Symposium was held September 24-25, 2006 to gather input on how all Albertans can work together to improve high school completion rates.
Infused Aboriginal Content into the K-12 Curriculum (AE)	• As of October 2006, Aboriginal content and perspectives have been infused to enhance curricula in Biology 20 and 30, Chemistry 20 and 30, Physics 20 and 30, Science 30 and Mathematics K-9.
Renewed the Funding Framework for Aboriginal Students (AE)	• Provided an additional $1,061/student in funding to jurisdictions to enhance supports and programs for eligible First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Increased Apprenticeship Participation (AAET)	• Registered over 23,000 new apprentices since April 2006, bringing the total number of apprentices being trained to over 60,000.
Increased Access to Apprenticeship Technical Training (AAET)	• Invested more than $15 million to provide in-class portion of apprenticeship programs to more than 3,600 additional apprentices across the province.
Increased Skills and Knowledge Recognition (AAET)	• Designated the snubbing services occupation as a trade effective January 1, 2007.
Developed Policies in Support of the A Learning Alberta Review (AAET)	• Released a new Tuition Fee Policy for post-secondary programs as well as an Affordability Framework.
Developed New Scholarships and Expanded Existing Scholarships and Bursaries (AAET)	• Developed new scholarships including a graduate scholarship and fellowship program for Masters' and PhD students, and the Lois Hole Humanities and Social Sciences Scholarship for post-secondary students. • Implemented the Millennium Alberta Rural Incentive Bursary (August 2006), a financial incentive for rural students to make the transition into post-secondary education. • Expanded the Alexander Rutherford High School Achievement Scholarship for Grade 12 students. • Created a new First Nations College Access Grant, a one year $2 million pilot to help increase the participation of Aboriginal Albertans in post-secondary studies.
Increased Investment in the Access to the Future Fund (AAET)	• Invested $250 million into the Access to the Future endowment, bringing the total value to $1 billion. The fund provides seed money for innovative and collaborative post-secondary projects as well as matching grants for donations to universities, colleges, technical institutes and other post-secondary institutions to improve access and quality.

	• Received commitment to allow Aboriginal colleges to access matching resources through the fund.
Carried out an Employment Standards Program Review (AEII)	• Developed an Employment Standards Strategic Plan which focuses activities on priority areas identified by key internal and external stakeholders in the Employment Standards Program Review.
Promoted Adoption of Technology and Best Practices to Employers (AEII)	• Published a four-part series of advertorials on technology adoption in November, December, February and March 2007 editions of the Alberta Venture magazine. • Undertook 36 LEAN assessments on behalf of Alberta employers along with implementation support.
Promoted Productivity/Industry Competitiveness (AEII)	• Developed business case and program briefs including organizational assessment, mentoring, benchmarking, expansion of LEAN program and manufacturing services coordination. • Developed and implemented a communications strategy to promote LEAN enterprise to sectors other than manufacturing.
Developed a New Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code (AEII)	• Signed a Ministerial Order on November 7, 2006 adopting the OHS Code 2006. The new code came into force on February 1, 2007.
Implemented the Accelerating Innovation Strategy (AEII)	• Provided marketing, mentorship, business and technical advice to organizations on a variety of activities. • Provided funding to innovative support agencies fostering support for commercialization.

Retain

Held Minister's Symposium to Share Employer Best Practices (AEII)	• Held a symposium in September 2006 to highlight new and innovative approaches Alberta businesses are taking to attract, develop and retain their people.
Commenced Activities to Increase Retention of Mature Workers (AEII)	• Formed a working group in November 2006 to develop strategies to engage and retain mature workers, including increasing the flexibility of work arrangements. Strategies include research on disincentives for workforce participation.
Extended Health Benefits to Support Integration of Under-represented Labour Groups into the Workforce (AEII)	• Extended health benefits effective July 1, 2006 to all persons leaving income support for employment. This ensures low income working Albertans have access to essential health benefits such as optical, dental and prescription drugs.
Developed Community Immigration Plans (AEII)	• Developing plans with Red Deer, Lloydminster, Edmonton, Calgary and Vegreville to address immigrant retention and integration issues in these communities.
Worked to Create Welcoming Communities and Workplaces (ATPRC)	• Awarded approximately $850,000 in grants to reduce racism and discrimination in communities, organizations and workplaces. • Held 97 workshops with almost 2,300 participants to promote building inclusive and respectful workplaces. • Published an Alberta version of the booklet: Call for a Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination and consulted with municipalities to determine support for continuing work on this initiative. • Developed and broadcast: Help Make a Difference public service announcements on Global TV to promote inclusive and respectful communities and workplaces September to December 2006.

	• Produced two reports from consultations with Albertans to advance human rights, diversity and multiculturalism. The reports emphasize the inclusion and integration of immigrants and minorities into Alberta communities and workplaces. The reports are titled: Creating Inclusive Communities Stakeholder Consultation: What We Heard, and Creating Inclusive Communities: Framework for the Future 2007-2012. • Held the Diversity Leadership Award presentation in February 2007 to recognize organizations that embrace diversity in the workplace, encourage respect and inclusion, and eliminate discrimination. • Conducted focus groups with immigrant and First Nations, Métis and Inuit adults and youth to determine perspectives and experiences related to diversity and inclusion. • Surveyed adult Albertans and immigrants on their perspectives and experiences related to human rights, discrimination and inclusion in Alberta.
Coordinated Research into the Skills Required to Support Innovation (AAET)	• Completed phase two of the Alberta Science and Research Authority sponsored report on retention of Highly Qualified People (HQP). Recommendations developed on how to foster attraction, growth and retention of HQP in the province.
Developed New Training for Child Care Staff and Day Home Providers (ACS)	• Developed new training initiatives to improve the knowledge and skills of new and existing child care staff and family day home providers to support the needs of immigrants, Aboriginal families living off-reserve and francophone families.
Established New Family Violence and Bullying Programs (ACS)	• Developed a call for proposals for communities to access funding to provide programs and increase the community response of Albertans, including Aboriginal and multi-cultural groups.

Acronym Glossary

AAET	Alberta Advanced Education and Technology
AAF	Alberta Agriculture and Food
ACS	Alberta Children's Services
AE	Alberta Education
AEII	Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry
AIIAR	Alberta International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations
ASCS	Alberta Seniors and Community Supports
ATPRC	Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture

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